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## U.S. Apologizes to France for Concealing Accused Nazi War Criminal Klaus Barbie

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WASHINGTON—The U.S. has expressed "deep regrets" to France for concealing accused Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie after World War II.

The apology, which was delivered to French authorities last Friday, was recommended by Allan A. Ryan, the Justice Department's chief investigator of alleged Nazi war criminals. In a 218-page report, Mr. Ryan confirmed that as many as six U.S. Army intelligence officers knowingly obstructed efforts to extradite Mr. Barbie from Germany to France for trial in 1950. The report also verifies that U.S. officials arranged his escape to Bolivia via an underground railroad known as "the rat line."

Many of the details in the report have been previously alleged, but Mr. Ryan's volume represents the first official U.S. confirmation of them.

The report documents that the U.S. Army's Counter Intelligence Corps recruited Mr. Barbie in 1947 and employed him as an intelligence operative through 1950. At first, the report finds, Army officers lacked credible evidence linking Mr. Barbie to war crimes. But when serious allegations emerged, the report says, they decided to conceal him.

Mr. Barbie, 69 years old, is awaiting trial in France on charges of torturing French civilians and sending thousands more to concentration camps. He was tried and convicted in absentia in the 1950s on similar charges and sentenced to death, but that sentence no longer applies. He was extradited from Bolivia last February only after persistent efforts by France to obtain his return to face trial. Mr. Ryan's study of Mr. Barbie's case was ordered by department officials to determine the truth of allegations that the U.S. helped Mr. Barbie evade justice.

According to the report, certain Army officers decided to prevent the French from obtaining Mr. Barbie, because they believed the U.S. would be embarrassed if he were confirmed to have been a war criminal.

They also feared, Mr. Ryan concludes, that he might disclose his extensive knowledge of U.S. intelligence operations, including those against the French.

Mr. Ryan calls the officers' actions "indefensible." And in a memo to Attorney General William French Smith, he noted that they weren't officially condoned by the U.S. government. Yet he said that the government can't disclaim responsibility as the officers acted "to protect what they believed to be the interests of" the U.S.

Mr. Ryan's study fails to find evidence to verify allegations that the Central Intelligence Agency or any other U.S. government unit had any relationship with Mr. Barbie in Germany or in Bolivia. It finds only that the Army briefly considered "reactivating" him in the mid-1960s, but decided against it.

In a news conference, Mr. Ryan also said he doesn't believe any other suspected Nazi war criminal was shielded from justice by U.S. government actions.

During World War II, Mr. Barbie was head of the Gestapo, the German secret police, in the southern French city of Lyon.

According to the report, he was recruited in April 1947 by Army intelligence officer Robert S. Taylor, partly because Mr. Barbie was a leader of a network of former German police and intelligence men. The report says that was a "defensible" action; Mr. Ryan concludes that the Army found Mr. Barbie useful and didn't then believe that the man later known as the "Butcher of Lyon" was guilty of war crimes.

But in 1949 and 1950, new charges surfaced that Mr. Barbie had committed war crimes, and the French authorities stepped up efforts to locate him and secure his extradition.

Initially, the report says, Army officers responded that the new charges were "probably not true." And they disregarded instructions from their headquarters to drop him as an employee.

Mr. Ryan finds that attempts to locate Mr. Barbie were frustrated for a time by bureaucratic confusion. But he says that Army intelligence officers decided on May 4, 1950, that the former Gestapo leader shouldn't be turned over to the French. He says officers falsely told U.S. civilian authorities in occupied Germany six weeks

later that their intelligence agents hadn't been in touch with him since April and didn't know where to find him. At the time, he was living in an Army intelligence house in Augsburg, in the U.S.-occupied zone, the report says.

In the news conference, Mr. Ryan said that the highest-ranking officer involved in the deception was the late Brig. Gen. Robert K. Taylor, director of U.S. military intelligence in the U.S. occupied Germany (He was no relation to Mr. Barbie's recruiter Robert S. Taylor). Yet the report says it "cannot be stated with absolute certainty" that Gen. Taylor knew that Mr. Barbie was being harbored.

Officers arranged Mr. Barbie's escape to Bolivia on International Red Cross travel documents and other arrangements made by a Croatian priest who was known as a fascist war criminal. Mr. Ryan's report suggests that using this route risked compromising intelligence methods or information.

The report finds that Mr. Barbie traveled to the U.S. in 1969 and 1970 under his alias, Klaus Altmann, apparently on business for a Bolivian shipping company. But the report discounts allegations that he was involved in narcotics or weapons trafficking.

Mr. Ryan concludes that the Army officers who concealed Mr. Barbie from French authorities were concerned only about protecting operations and didn't show any "awareness" that they were obstructing justice. He expresses optimism that changes in U.S. intelligence agencies in recent years make it less likely that this could happen again.